

Bob Dylan And The Band
The Basement Tapes Complete
Columbia Legacy

by Peter Stone Brown

It's November of 1967. Nothing had been heard from Bob Dylan and very little written about him since the motorcycle accident in July 29th the year before. The previous May a reporter for the *New York Daily News* actually found his house and Bob Dylan, but other than that there was nothing until autumn when a couple of conflicting one-inch stories in the *New York Times* appeared saying Dylan's contract with Columbia records had been suspended, then another that he was finally going to make a new album in Nashville. Before that album was released, one night in November listening to the radio, I heard Jerry White who was a long-time folk music DJ with a nightly show in the New York metropolitan area announce a new Dylan song, "Too Much of Nothing" released as a single by Peter, Paul & Mary, featuring Paul Butterfield on harp. It was the first new Dylan song since *Blonde On Blonde* was released in June 1966. The beginning of 1968 started with the release of Dylan's *John Wesley Harding*, that was nothing like anything that was happening in popular music or rock and roll at the time. A month or so later, I was listening to Bob Fass's legendary all-night *Radio Unnameable* when he played a new Dylan song, "Down In The Flood" recorded by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs of all people. For the next several months new Dylan songs by other artists kept appearing on the radio, including "The Mighty Quinn," by Manfred Mann, "Wheels On Fire" by Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger & The Trinity, and "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" by the Byrds. Then in July, the debut of Dylan's backing group soon to be known as The Band, *Music From Big Pink* was released. There were three new Dylan songs, two of them collaborations, "Tears of Rage" with Richard Manuel and "This Wheel's On Fire" with Rick Danko, as well as "I Shall Be Released." Not long after that, I saw an article in a new (to New York) magazine called *Rolling Stone* describing a 13 song tape by Dylan and The Band under the title "Dylan's Basement Tape Should Be Released."